

REMARKS

Upon entry of the amendments, claims 1-4, 6, 7, and 9 will be pending in the application.

Amendment

Applicants respectfully request entry of the amendments, which primarily address the 112 issues raised in the final Office Action. The additional features set forth in claim 1 are believed to have already been searched and considered by the Examiner (reference is generally made to claim 9). Therefore, the amendments should be entered.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-4, 6, and 7 are rejected for being indefinite.

Claim 1 has been amended to remove the “processed object” language and the preamble has been amended to address the issues raised in paragraphs 2a and 2b of the Office Action. Applicants note that the Examiner appears to be taking the “which is not yet processed” language out of context in regards of the specification and claim language. However, this phrase has been removed.

Regarding paragraph 2c, Applicants note that the Examiner is unsure “how the linear motor is considered as mounted in vertical directions.” Reference is made to page 7, line 25, to page 8, line 2, of the specification and the accompanying figures. The rejected language apprises one skilled in the art as to the nature of the invention and provides guidance as to what would constitute infringement. Those skilled in the art would understand what is claimed when the claim is read in light of the specification.

The claim should not be rejected because the Examiner merely wants the Applicants to improve the clarity or precision of the language used.

Regarding paragraphs 2d and 2e, Applicants have amended claim 9 to provide sufficient antecedent basis for the features noted in the Office Action.

Applicants respectfully submit that the claims comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112 and the rejections should be withdrawn. No new matter is considered to have been introduced in the foregoing claim amendments.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

The following anticipation rejections were raised in the Office Action:

- (A) claims 1 and 7 are rejected based upon WO 98/19333;
- (B) claims 1-3 and 7 are rejected based upon Akimoto (5,844,662); and
- (C) claims 1, 7, and 9 are rejected based upon Berner (US 6,203,582).

Applicants have carefully considered the rejections and request that they be withdrawn.

The cited prior art patents fail to inherently or explicitly disclose all the features of the rejected claims.

Regarding independent claim 1, the cited prior art fails to depict the following feature:

“wherein both said load port unit and said linear motor are mounted on a front wall of said system body, said load port unit is mounted on the outside of the front wall of said system body, and said linear motor is

mounted in vertical directions inside of said front wall of said system body.”

When a linear motor is a component in the prior art, it is usually mounted on the bottom portion of the system body. This is a common problem in the prior art and is illustrated by Fig. 8 of the present application. Such an arrangement causes exhaust problems and results in a higher occurrence of defective wafers because of dust. Further, such an arrangement has problems in regards of positioning the wafers by a transfer robot.

These problems are shared by WO ‘333 and Akimoto. As shown in Fig. 3 of WO ‘333, the linear motor 45 is supported on the base of the apparatus with parallel linear rails 44 being provided along the base of the apparatus. Likewise, Akimoto has rails (11, 31, and 51) that are supported by the base of the apparatus and corresponds to the prior art depicted in Figure 8. Both of these patents fail to disclose a linear motor mounted on a front wall of the system body.

Applicants note that Berner depicts a linear motor that appears to be mounted on the front wall. However, Berner fails to disclose that the load port is mounted on the outside of the front wall. Applicants reference the load ports (38, 39) shown in Figure 2 of Berner. Applicants note that the Examiner refers to part 66 as being the front wall, however, this part number actually refers to the transport guide.

Applicants believe that the cited patents fail to anticipate the features set forth in independent claim 1 and dependent claims 2, 3, and 7.

Regarding the rejection of claim 9 based upon Berner, Applicants note that the cited patent fails to disclose:

“wherein a load port unit is mounted on the outside of said front wall, and said linear motor is supported by said front wall within the system body.”

Hence, the anticipation rejection of claim 9 should be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Office Action sets forth the following obviousness rejections:

- (A) claims 1-3, 7, and 9 rejected in view of Van Doren and Yoshida;
- (B) claims 4 and 6 rejected in view of WO ‘333 and Ito;
- (C) claims 4 and 6 rejected in view of Akimoto and Ito;
- (D) claims 4 and 6 rejected in view of Van Doren, Yoshida, and Ito.

Applicants have carefully considered the rejections and request that they be withdrawn.

Regarding rejection A, the proposed modification of Van Doren with the teachings of Yoshida fails to suggest all the features of the claimed invention. Most notably, the cited patents fails to teach the following feature of claim 1:

“wherein both said load port unit and said linear motor are mounted on a front wall of said system body, said load port unit is mounted on the outside of the front wall of said system body, and said linear motor is mounted in vertical directions inside of said front wall of said system body,”

and the following feature of claim 9:

“wherein a load port unit is mounted on the outside of said front wall, and said linear motor is supported by said front wall within the system body.”

Van Doren fails to depict the aforementioned arrangement. Yoshida has an arrangement where the linear motor is supported by the base. Reference is made to Figs. 4-7 of Yoshida.

Regarding rejections B, C, and D, Applicants respectfully submit that the relevant independent claims are not anticipated or obvious in view of the cited prior art. Therefore, dependent claims 4 and 6 would not be considered obvious.

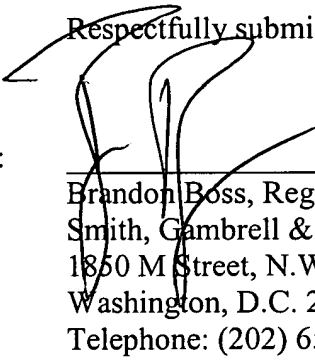
CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully assert that the application should be allowed. If any additional fees are due in connection with the filing of this response, please charge the fees to Deposit Account No. 02-4300. Any overpayment can be credited to Deposit Account No. 02-4300.

Respectfully submitted,

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Signature:



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* Practice is limited to matters and proceeding before federal courts and agencies.